

II.—*Notes on the Birds of Peking.*

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THE following notes are not intended to serve as a complete list of the birds of Peking; they are founded on a collection that I made there whilst a member of the British Contingent, China Field Force, from August 1900 to July 1901. In the early part of that period the country around Peking was in too disturbed a state, and for the last three months I had too much professional work on hand, to allow me to devote much time to ornithology; but during the winter I collected more or less regularly.

Quite a large proportion of the birds were obtained within the city, in the grounds surrounding the Temple of Heaven, where the regiment to which I was attached was quartered. These grounds form a large park-like enclosure of many acres, in which are several groves of trees. The place is much frequented by birds of all kinds, especially during the seasons of migration.

The country around Peking is a vast plain, and is practically all under cultivation. I found that the best spots for observing and collecting birds were the plantations round the numerous small cemeteries that are scattered among the fields. Another good place was a considerable area of marshy ground just inside the city wall, in the south-east corner of the Chinese city. Here there were a number of ponds surrounded by reed-beds, which were the resort of many Ducks and other water-birds, though the reeds were so thick and high that it was not always easy to retrieve the birds when shot. The best places for Ducks and Snipe within reach of Peking are the large lakes at the Summer Palace. The water is, however, very open and the birds most wary.

The climate of Peking presents great contrasts of heat and cold. During the march, in August, from Tientsin to the relief of the Legations, the temperature was frequently as much as 105° Fahr. in the shade. During December, January, and February the cold was intense; the rivers and

ponds were all frozen hard, and snow lay on the ground for about six weeks. The most unpleasant feature of the climate consists in the very frequent dust-storms and blizzards. These often last for several days at a time and make outdoor work very disagreeable.

The country from Peking to the sea is quite flat; to the west of the city, and distant from four to twelve miles, is a range of hills, to which, in ordinary times, the European residents go during the hot weather, and at the foot of which is the Summer Palace. I had hoped to pay a visit to these hills, but circumstances unfortunately prevented me from doing so.

In the immediate vicinity of Peking there are no rivers of any size. A small stream partly skirts and partly runs through the Hunting Park, and there is a neglected shallow canal between the city and the lakes at the Summer Palace. The Hunting Park is about three miles to the south of the Chinese city. It is all grass-land and there are some small lakes in it. The fact that there are no forests close to Peking accounts for the absence of many birds that one would have expected to meet with.

The Pekinese are great bird-fanciers. Like the Mussulman inhabitants of India, with their Partridges and Quails, the Chinese are fond of carrying their birds about out of doors, either in small cages or tethered by a string to a twig. The favourite cage-birds are Calandra Larks, Ruby-throats, Blue-throated Robins, Siskins, and a species of *Dryonastes*. Some of the birds in my collection were obtained from the professional bird-catchers. These men take very large numbers of small birds of all kinds, both with small bow-nets of a very simple design and with bird-lime; many of their captures are sold for cage-birds, and the remainder, no matter how small the size may be, are eaten. I also purchased a few dead birds—mostly Ducks—in the markets during the winter. The only drawback to the latter method of collecting was that, as most of the birds were frozen hard, possibly some of them had not been obtained in the neighbourhood of Peking, but had been brought from

a distance. However, I checked this as far as possible by inquiry made through an interpreter.

The nomenclature adopted in the following list is mainly that which is employed by Messrs. Oates and Blanford in the 'Fauna of British India.' In the case of birds which do not occur in India I have used the classification of the British Museum Catalogue.

I am glad to take this opportunity of thanking Mr. Frank Finn, of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, for much help in the identification of my specimens.

1. *CORVUS TORQUATUS.*

In the middle of August, when I reached Peking, there were very few of these handsome Crows; from October onwards they arrived in large numbers, and were quite common during the winter. Most of them had left by the middle of May, but I still saw an occasional specimen up to the middle of July, when I went away from Peking. They are very wary birds and unusually silent for Crows, though they have the usual deep harsh "caw." One call, which is often uttered on the wing, consists of three notes, with an interval of a fifth between the first and second, the third note being the same as the second.

2. *CORVUS MACRORHYNCHUS.*

Common, but less so than *C. pastinator*. The specimens that I got in Peking are identical with Indian birds.

3. *CORVUS PASTINATOR.*

A very common resident. Nearly all the Rooks and Crows leave Peking in the early morning, large mixed flocks of the various species going off to feed in the Hunting Park and in the fields round the city. They come back at sunset to roost.

4. *CORVUS DAURICUS.*

This bird comes to Peking at about the same time as *C. torquatus*. It was especially numerous during the very cold weather in December and January. Its voice is very like that of the English Jackdaw.

5. *PICA RUSTICA*.

This is one of the commonest birds in the province of Chi Li, and is very plentiful and tame in the city itself.

6. *UROCISSA ERYTHORHYNCHA*.

I did not see this bird wild, but bought some dead specimens in the market in February. The Chinese keep a few in captivity.

7. *CYANOPOLIUS CYANUS*.

Very common near Peking. The birds go about in flocks of from ten to twenty, feeding mostly on the ground. They are noisy, and have very varied hissing and metallic-sounding notes. The members of a flock follow one another about like Babblers.

8. *PARUS MINOR*.

I purchased one caged specimen, but saw no wild birds, nor did the bird-catchers bring me any. Père David says that this species is found in the mountains near Peking.

9. *PARUS PALUSTRIS*.

A common resident, very numerous in the Temple of Heaven Park.

10. *ZOSTEROPS ERYTHROPLEURA*.

Several live specimens of this White-eye were brought in by the bird-catchers at the end of May.

11. *CERTHIA FAMILIARIS*.

I shot two specimens during a very severe frost in January. I saw no others. Père David (quoted by Swinhoe, Proc. Zool. Soc. 1871, p. 350) says that the Tree-creeper is a rare visitant to Peking in winter.

12. *REGULUS CRISTATUS*.

I saw and shot a few Goldcrests in the first fortnight of January.

13. *LOCUSTELLA CERTHIOLA*.

Pallas's Grasshopper-Warbler occurred in small numbers at the end of May. David and Oustalet ('Oiseaux de la Chine') did not meet with it at Peking.

14. *ACROCEPHALUS ORIENTALIS.*

This species arrived at the end of May and was very common during the summer. It is a very noisy bird, and frequents thick reed-beds over water, where, perched at the top of a high stem and singing a loud harsh song almost continuously, it is a very conspicuous object.

15. *ACROCEPHALUS BISTRIGICEPS.*

Schrenck's Reed-Warbler was also common. It arrives at the same time and has much the same habits as the preceding species.

16. *ACROCEPHALUS AGRICOLA.*

Common at the same time as the last two species. It is found further away from water than the latter.

17. *ARUNDINAX AËDON.*

A summer visitor to Peking. This bird is often kept in captivity by the Chinese, who carry it about the streets tethered to a twig by a fine silk thread fastened round the neck. It seems to become tame within a day or two of its capture.

18. *PHYLLOSCOPUS FUSCATUS.*

The Dusky Willow-Warbler was common for about a month, from the middle of April. I did not notice it after the middle of May, by which time the reproductive organs were still very little developed. It probably does not breed at Peking.

19. *PHYLLOSCOPUS PROREGULUS.*

Large numbers of this species passed through Peking on migration in April and October. I saw none in the intervening months. This was the earliest of the Warblers to arrive. I shot the first specimen on April 6th.

20. *PHYLLOSCOPUS SUPERCILIOSUS.*

Common for about four weeks in May, arriving at the beginning of the month. Also fairly common at the beginning of September. This bird keeps to the tops of the trees and has a dissyllabic call-note—very loud for such a small bird.

21. ACANTHOPNEUSTE CORONATA.

I did not notice this bird before the end of May, when the sexual organs were well developed.

† 22. ACANTHOPNEUSTE BOREALIS.

This was the latest of the Warblers to arrive at Peking, which it did at the very end of May.

23. LANIUS SUPERCILIOSUS. }

24. LANIUS LUCIONENSIS. }

These two Shrikes were first seen about the middle of May. They are very shy, but reconcile themselves readily to captivity.

25. LANIUS TIGRINUS.

Arrived at Peking in June. It was never very numerous.

26. AMPELIS GARRULUS.

Waxwings were fairly numerous for about three weeks from the middle of January onwards, during very cold weather. They occurred in flocks of ten or twelve and were very shy. I shot several inside the city, in the Temple of Heaven Park.

I did not see *A. phænicopterus*.

27. ORIOLUS CHINENSIS.

Fairly common. Orioles arrived at the beginning of June, and commenced to nest almost at once.

28. MUSCICAPA GRISEO-STICTA.

Common at the end of May and beginning of June.

29. SIPHIA ALBICILLA.

This Flycatcher passed through Peking at the beginning of September and returned at the beginning of May. It keeps to the very lowest branches, two or three feet from the ground, whence it takes short flights, returning to the same perch. It frequently alights on the ground and is distinctly crepuscular in its habits. It has a very harsh, loud note.

30. ALSEONAX LATIROSTRIS.

Both adults and young birds were common during August

and the early part of September. They returned to Peking about the middle of May.

31. TERPSIPHONE INCII.

I first saw a bird of this species, a male in the white plumage, on May 21st. Mr. Oates ('Fauna Brit. India,' Birds, vol. ii. p. 47) considers that *T. incii* never assumes the white plumage. I was unable to shoot the bird mentioned above, but a few days afterwards *T. incii* became fairly common; unfortunately, I only managed to secure specimens in the chestnut plumage, which, however, were all *T. incii*. It seems unlikely that the first bird was of a different species.

32. PRATINCOLA MAURA.

This Bush-Chat was very common for about ten days at the beginning of May, on some waste land inside the Chinese city. I did not see it afterwards.

33. RUTICILLA AUROREA.

I shot a few Redstarts of this species during October, and again early in April. I saw none after about the middle of the latter month.

34. CYANECULA SUECICA.

A very favourite cage-bird. The Chinese bird-catchers caught a great many during the month of May.

35. ERITHACUS CYANEUS.

Several specimens of the Siberian Blue Robin were brought to me by the bird-catchers at the end of May. I did not see it wild.

36. CALLIOPE CAMTSCHATKENSIS.

Many Ruby-throats were caught during May. They seem to thrive well, for a time at least, on a mixture of finely chopped up raw meat and bean-flour paste; but a bird that has passed safely through the winter in captivity commands a good price.

37. TARSIGER CYANURUS.

This was the earliest of the spring migrants at Peking. Many cock birds arrived in the middle of March, the hens

coming about a fortnight later. This species feeds a good deal on the ground, like a Robin, but is also somewhat Muscicapine in its habits, catching insects in the air, and returning after a short flight to its original perch. It frequently moves its wings and tail like a Redstart. I only heard it utter a harsh call-note.

38. XANTHOPYGIA TRICOLOR.

I obtained a few specimens at the end of May. The bird appears to be uncommon at Peking.

39. TURDUS NAUMANNI.

I saw no Ouzels until the beginning of November, when a few individuals of this species appeared in the Temple of Heaven Park, and in small plantations outside the city. By the middle of November *T. naumanni* had become quite common, and it increased in numbers as the winter went on. For about a month this was the only Ouzel that I obtained; then *T. ruficollis* arrived, and soon became equally numerous. The two species associated freely with one another. At first the birds were met with singly or in small parties, but when the cold became severe and the ground was covered with snow they formed flocks of twenty or more individuals. I did not see *T. naumanni* after the beginning of June. It has a very loud alarm-note.

40. TURDUS RUFICOLLIS.

The Red-throated Ouzel arrived at about the beginning of December, and was common until the beginning of May. David and Oustalet ('Oiseaux de la Chine') say that it is rare at Peking. This was not my experience, though it was never so abundant as the preceding species.

41. TURDUS FUSCATUS.

I obtained specimens of the Dusky Ouzel at Peking in April and May, but did not see it during the winter. It associated with the two preceding species, which, by the time that *T. fuscatus* appeared, had become much reduced in numbers.

42. *TURDUS OBSCURUS.*

I shot two birds of this species in the last week of May. They were with a small party of *T. naumanni*, and seemed to be rather wilder, flying up to the topmost branches of high trees when alarmed.

43. *TURDUS ATRIGULARIS.*

A few Black-throated Ouzels passed through Peking in the end of April.

44. *COCCOTHRAUSTES JAPONICUS.*

Hawfinches were very common in and about Peking, from the beginning of November until the end of April.

45. *LOXIA*, sp. inc.

I did not see any wild Crossbills. The bird-fanciers had a few (probably *L. japonica*) in the early spring. They asked such high prices for them that I think that they must either be very rare or else be brought from some distance.

46. *CARPODACUS ERYTHRINUS.*

Not very common, and only seen during May.

47. *CHRYSOMITRIS SPINUS.*

I saw a few Siskins in the autumn. The Chinese bird-fanciers keep large numbers in captivity.

48. *LINOTA LINARIA.*

Very common from November until the beginning of April.

49. *CHLORIS SINICA.*

This species occurred in large flocks in the Temple of Heaven Park, for a few days at the end of January. They were very wild and kept to the tops of the trees.

50. *FRINGILLA MONTIFRINGILLA.*

Very common all through the winter, but disappeared about the middle of April.

51. *PASSER MONTANUS.*

This is the Common Sparrow of Peking. It is quite as familiar as *P. domesticus* elsewhere.

52. *EMBERIZA AUREOLA*.

Common in the reed-beds up to the beginning of November. After that it was absent from Peking until the middle of May, from which time it became plentiful, but only stayed for about a month.

53. *EMBERIZA PUSILLA*.

I did not see the Dwarf Bunting until early in October. It was excessively common all through the winter, and remained, but in diminished numbers, until the middle of July, when I left Peking. It has a long, rather pretty, but weak song.

54. *EMBERIZA RUSTICA*.

I shot a few specimens of this Bunting in the middle of October, but did not see it again.

55. *EMBERIZA SCHENICLUS*.

Very common, from December onwards, through the winter.

56. *EMBERIZA LEUCOCEPHALA*.

I saw a few small flocks of the Pine-Bunting, and shot some specimens, during very severe weather, at the end of February.

57. *EMBERIZA RUTILA*.

The Chestnut Bunting arrived about the middle of May. It has a single loud call-note.

58. *EMBERIZA SPODOCEPHALA*.

Common during the spring migration in May. My specimens quite bear out Mr. Hume's observations ('Stray Feathers,' vol. xi. p. 276) that Chinese specimens of this Bunting have the throat and breast much more grey than those from India.

59. *EMBERIZA ELEGANS*.

A few examples of this species were brought to me by a bird-catcher at the end of May. I did not see it wild myself.

60. *EMBERIZA CASTANEICEPS*.

I shot a few specimens at the end of May.

61. *EMBERIZA FUCATA.*

This Bunting arrived at the same time as the preceding species. It was not at all common.

- +62. *HIRUNDO RUSTICA.* }
63. *HIRUNDO GUTTURALIS.* }

A few of my skins appear to be typical specimens of each of these species, but the majority are quite intermediate. I omitted to record the date of departure of the Swallows in the autumn. In the spring I saw the first one, in the Hunting Park, on March 31st. Then came a short spell of cold weather, and it was not until a fortnight later that the Swallows became at all numerous.

64. *MOTACILLA OCULARIS.* }
65. *MOTACILLA CITREOLA.* }
66. *MOTACILLA BOREALIS.* }

These three Wagtails reached Peking at the beginning of May, and were about equally plentiful.

67. *LIMONIDROMUS INDICUS.*

I first saw the Forest-Wagtail at the end of May. It was never very common. It frequented small groves of trees, and was very like a Tree-Pipit in its habits. It feeds on the ground and flies up to a branch when disturbed.

68. *ANTHUS MACULATUS.*

Common, apparently, throughout the year.

69. *ANTHUS SPINOLETTA.*

Very common during the winter.

70. *MELANOCORYPHA MONGOLICA.*

According to Swinhoe (Proc. Zool. Soc. 1871, p. 390) this Lark occurs on the Peking plains in winter; but, although on the look-out for it, I never saw it wild. It is one of the commonest and most popular cage-birds of the Chinese, as it thrives in captivity and is an indefatigable songster. Its notes, however, are unpleasantly loud and shrill.

†71. *ALAUDA ARVENSIS*.

Very common during the winter, when many are caught and eaten by the Chinese. It is probably a resident at Peking.

72. *GALERITA CRISTATA*.

Not common. I shot a few in the autumn.

73. *GECCINUS CANUS*.

A very common resident. This Woodpecker was especially plentiful in the Temple of Heaven Park. It feeds a great deal on the ground.

74. *DENDROCOPUS CABANISI*.

Common. Makes a very loud noise when tapping on a tree. The sound is equally sonorous whether the branch is large or small, and must be produced by the bird itself, irrespectively of the degree of hollowness of the bough. This species has a very loud, constantly repeated, "clucking" call.

75. *IYNGIPICUS SCINTILLICEPS*.

Common and resident. One of my specimens, a male, shot in the middle of December, has the under parts uniform buffy white, with no trace of longitudinal stripes; the amount of white on the back is more extensive than in any of the other skins.

76. *ALCEDO ISPIDA*.

Not at all common near Peking.

77. *UPUPA EPOPS*.

Very common and breeding in the spring. David and Oustalet ('Oiseaux de la Chine') mention that it sometimes occurs in Peking in the coldest weather of winter. I shot one, which shewed no signs of having been in confinement, on December 9th, during a week of very hard frost. After that I saw no more Hoopoes until the middle of March.

78. *CYPSELUS APUS*.

Very common all through the summer. It arrived at the end of April.

79. CUCULUS CANORUS.

Cuckoos arrived about the middle of May and were very numerous for about a fortnight in the grounds surrounding the Temple of Heaven. They avoided the higher trees, and perched on very low branches, feeding frequently on the ground. At the beginning of June they dispersed about the district.

80. ASIO OTUS.

This was the only Owl that I saw. It was rather common, especially in the groves of trees round the Chinese cemeteries.

81. AQUILA sp. inc.

I saw a large Eagle, which I could not identify, hanging up at a stall in the market during the winter. I think that it was probably *A. bifasciata*, in immature plumage.

82. CIRCUS MELANOLEUCUS. }

83. CIRCUS CYANEUS. }

These two Harriers are very common residents, and are constantly to be seen hunting over the grass plains to the south of the city.

84. ACCIPITER NISUS.

Rather common and resident.

85. FALCO PEREGRINUS.

Not uncommon. I shot one inside the Temple of Heaven Park and saw another in the south-east corner of the Chinese city. The latter bird made a fine swoop at a Mallard, which it just missed.

86. ÆSALON REGULUS.

Very common, especially in winter.

+87. TINNUNCULUS ALAUDARIUS.

Also very common. Although I saw and shot a good many Kestrels I did not recognise or obtain an example of *T. cenchris*.

88. COLUMBA LIVIA.

Common, in a semi-domesticated state, in and about Peking.

89. *TURTUR RISORIUS*.

During November I saw two individuals of this species, and shot one, a few miles south of Peking. I never saw it again; there certainly were none during the winter, and in the spring I had very few opportunities of collecting at any distance from the city.

90. *TURTUR ORIENTALIS*.

Very common after March. I think that a few individuals of this species remained at Peking during the winter. On several occasions during the severe weather I saw a Dove that looked like *T. orientalis*, but was unable at the time to procure a specimen.

91. *PUCRASIA XANTHOSPILA*.

A few of these Pheasants were exposed for sale in the market in January and February.

+92. *PHASIANUS TORQUATUS*.

There were very many of these birds in the markets during the winter. Most of them came from the "Western Hills." I saw one wild at a place about ten miles from the city.

93. *COTURNIX JAPONICA*.

Very common during the whole time that I was at Peking, except for about four weeks in the middle of winter, when the ground was covered with snow. I shot several examples in the Temple of Heaven Park. I kept one in a cage for some time, but never heard it utter a sound.

94. *CACCABIS CHUKAR*.

I saw two or three Chukors in the market during the winter.

95. *TURNIX BLANFORDI*.

I shot two specimens of the Burmese Button-Quail in the Temple of Heaven Park in June.

96. *PORZANA PUSILLA*.

I obtained one specimen, in May, of the Eastern Baillon's Crake. This bird, like its congeners, is such an inveterate skulker that it is hard to say whether it is common or not.

97. *GALLINULA CHLOROPUS.*

Common about all the ponds as long as they remained unfrozen.

+98. *FULICA ATRA.*

Equally common.

99. *GRUS, sp. inc.*

On two occasions in the spring I saw small flocks of Cranes, high up in the air, flying northwards. The Manchurian Crane is sometimes kept in captivity in Peking.

100. *MICROSARCOPS CINEREUS* (Cat. B. xxiv. p. 133).

I had one specimen sent to me from the Summer Palace on April 1st. It was a hen, with a moderately developed ovary. I saw no others.

+101. *VANELLUS VULGARIS.*

There were large flocks of Lapwings in the Hunting Park at the end of March. They were very wild, and I only managed to shoot one.

102. *ÆGIALITIS ALEXANDRINA.*

I shot a single bird of this species at Tientsin in August, but did not see it alive at Peking, though there were several examples in a frozen state in the market during the winter.

103. *IBIDORHYNCHUS STRUTHERSI.*

I bought the only specimen which I saw in the market at the beginning of February.

+104. *NUMENIUS ARQUATA.*

Curlews were common in the early spring, especially in the Hunting Park.

+105. *TOTANUS OCHROPUS.*

Fairly common.

106. *TOTANUS GLAREOLA.*

I shot a few specimens in the spring.

107. *TRINGA TEMMINCKI.*

Common at Tientsin in August—uncommon at Peking.

108. GALLINAGO MEGALA.

I shot one of these large Snipes in the Temple of Heaven Park in May, and saw other birds, doubtless of this species, in the same place, at the end of September. It frequents dry spots, and has a rather slow, very direct flight, skimming along among the trees, a few feet from the ground, for twenty yards or so. It can be flushed several times before it becomes really alarmed.

+109. GALLINAGO CÆLESTIS.

Common, especially on the swampy lakes at the Summer Palace.

I did not happen to shoot any specimens of *G. stenura*, though David and Oustalet say that it is common in the neighbourhood of Peking.

+110. HYDROCHELIDON HYBRIDA.

I shot a Tern of this species at Tientsin in August.

+111. PHALACROCORAX CARBO.

Common on the large lake in front of the Summer Palace. A specimen obtained on March 21st was in full breeding-plumage.

+112. ARDEA CINEREA.

Common.

113. HERODIAS, sp. inc.

A large white Egret, of which I did not obtain a specimen, was fairly common in the spring. It was probably *H. alba*.

114. NYCTICORAX GRISEUS.

Commonly met with in the spring and summer: it is possibly a permanent resident.

115. BOTAURUS STELLARIS.

There were a few Bitterns in the market in the early spring.

116. CYGNUS OLOR.

I saw a dead Mute Swan in the market in winter. It had possibly been in captivity.

+117. *CYGNUS MUSICUS.*

Common all through the winter.

118. *ANSER*, sp. inc.

A Goose that I took to be a Bean - Goose — probably *A. serrirostris* (Cat. B. xxvii. p. 101)—was for sale in the market occasionally during the winter.

+119. *CASARCA RUTILA.*

Not uncommon.

+120. *ANAS BOSCAS.*

Very common all through the winter; probably the most abundant Duck about Peking.

121. *EUNETTA FALCATA.*

Common. The drake has a short, low, trilling whistle. This is an excellent bird for the table.

122. *NETTIUM FORMOSUM.*

Common. Blanford ('Fauna Brit. India,' Birds, vol. iv. p. 442) does not mention the fact that all the black parts of the head and neck of this species have a well-marked reddish-bronze metallic lustre. This is also a very good bird for the table.

+123. *NETTIUM CRECCA.*

The Common Teal was plentiful all through the winter.

+124. *MARECA PENELOPE.*

Rather common.

125. *NYROCA BAERI.*

Baer's Pochard was very common.

+126. *MERGUS ALBELLUS.*

Common during the winter.

127. *MERGANSER CASTOR.*

Common.

128. *PODICIPES CRISTATUS.*

Great Crested Grebes were common on the lakes at the Summer Palace in spring.

129. *PODICIPES PHILIPPENSIS.*

Common on all the ponds, except during very severe frosts.